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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 28 June 2010, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Ali ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Annual ministerial review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women (*continued*)

National voluntary presentations: Netherlands, Guatemala and the Republic of Moldova
(E/2010/60, 62 and 67)

1. **The President** invited Ms. Clark, Chairperson of the United Nations Development Group and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, to act as moderator for the national voluntary presentations.

Netherlands (E/2010/62)

2. *Mr. Schaper (Observer for the Netherlands) introduced a brief video on gender that contrasted the opportunities available to a grandmother and her granddaughter and emphasized how women's opportunities were important to society as a whole.*

3. **Mr. Schaper** (Observer for the Netherlands) said that only 55 years earlier, married women in the Netherlands had been considered legally incapable, yet since then women had become active in all domains of public life. In Parliament, 41 per cent of seats were held by women, while gender parity had almost been achieved in public administration. Women accounted for 53 per cent of university students, and over 70 per cent of women were engaged in paid employment for more than one hour a week.

4. Women's perceptions of issues were different from men's and both perspectives were needed to develop effective policies. As women still occupied fewer senior positions in politics, administration and business, the "Talent to the Top" Charter had been launched in 2008 to encourage businesses and public organizations to improve the situation. In 2007, the MDG3 Fund had been established, and owing to its success, the Netherlands, through the Government and civil society, was providing more than one third of all international support for women's organizations worldwide.

5. Population ageing in the Netherlands made it imperative to increase women's participation in the labour force. The Government had taken comprehensive measures to encourage women with children to stay in the labour market.

6. There were still 200 million women worldwide with unmet contraceptive needs. Given that educated women chose to have fewer children and that children from smaller families were more likely to go to school and receive health care, the Netherlands was the largest donor to the United Nations Population Fund.

7. Prevention of violence against women was another core objective. The physical integrity and safety of girls was at risk because of the unequal balance of power between men and women, prejudices concerning women's sexuality and rights and media exploitation of the female body. An estimated one in six girls and one in twenty boys in the Netherlands had been forced to perform or undergo sexual acts against their will. Parents were responsible for providing sex education for their children and schools should teach young people the life skills they needed to defend themselves.

8. The approximately 10 per cent of women in the Netherlands who were from ethnic-minority groups had a lower level of education than women of native Netherlands descent and than men from those groups. Efforts were focused on increasing their social and labour-force participation and on helping men and boys from those groups to change their views.

9. Inequality was most visible in societies in conflict. In 2007, the Netherlands had drafted a national action plan based on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Women had played a pivotal role in the peace process in Liberia and in South Sudan and could do the same in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Afghanistan. The Netherlands was increasing its cooperation with troop-contributing countries.

10. In conclusion, greater efforts to implement the gender agenda would help not only to improve the position of women in society, but also to improve society as a whole. The international community should seize that opportunity.

11. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala), reviewer, said that the report reflected the commitment of the Netherlands to addressing gender equality and highlighted the importance of active empowerment of women. The Netherlands offered an example of how the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could be attained through

political will and commitment, accompanied by adequate funding.

12. He asked what action the Netherlands was taking to achieve equality for women wishing to work full time and for women from ethnic minorities. He also wondered what practical recommendations the Netherlands could give to countries such as Guatemala, which had a much lower proportion of women in Parliament. It would be useful to hear how the strategies and initiatives referred to could be replicated in regional and international policies.

13. **Ms. Sportis** (France), reviewer, asked whether the Netherlands had conducted surveys to see whether women working part time wanted to work longer hours and what measures were in place to assist them. She wondered whether there were policies to support reconciliation of family and professional life for both men and women. It would also be interesting to hear about measures to combat the double discrimination suffered by immigrant women.

14. More information should be provided on efforts to fight stereotyping and promote equality and mutual respect between boys and girls, and on co-education. She wondered what measures would be taken as a result of the study on the consequences of sexualization. She asked about the methodology used to prepare the national action plan based on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and whether any preliminary conclusions had been drawn from it. Lastly, she was interested to hear how gender mainstreaming was used to advance equality.

15. **Mr. Barton** (United States of America), reviewer, asked how the Netherlands had built the political will to advance gender equality and sustain taxpayer support for its international programmes. As the Netherlands was lagging behind in key areas such as the workplace and economic independence, he wondered what the major obstacles to change were and why gender equality was still too often considered a "women's" issue.

16. With regard to the Netherlands' experience in conflict-affected areas and its political approach to development cooperation, he asked what lessons had been learned about expanding women's involvement in peace negotiations and demobilization programmes. He asked how the percentage of women peace signatories, currently less than 5 per cent, could be increased and how the short-term deployment of gender experts had worked in conflict settings.

17. Thirdly, he wondered which domestic and international initiatives had shown the greatest potential, and cited the fiscal incentives for returning to work or expanding working hours, the minority-integration efforts and the international initiative for assisting women to acquire titles to land.

18. **Mr. Schaper** (Observer for the Netherlands) said that society in the Netherlands had changed fundamentally in less than 60 years, moving away from its previous conservative, religious and very stable attitudes. It was an interesting lesson that women's position in society could change so rapidly.

19. As the Netherlands had not participated in the First World War, it had not shared the experience of neighbouring countries, where women had been employed because the men were away. Women's primary role had continued to be in the home, and today, although the culture was changing, the practical organization of society was developing more slowly. A relatively low proportion of women worked for more than 20 hours a week and schools still expected children to have lunch at home. Despite the impressive figures for parliamentary representation, women were still underrepresented on the boards of large companies and in certain business sectors.

20. Several years earlier, a Government statement to the effect that equality had been achieved as far as could be expected had triggered a strong and opposite reaction. It had led to an upsurge of interest in gender equality since about 2007, coinciding with the increased attention given to the issue by the United Nations.

21. **Mr. Dijksterhuis** (Observer for the Netherlands), Head, Gender Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that most of the women working part-time wished to work for between 20 and 27 hours a week, or 2 to 4 hours a week more than they did currently. The Government had introduced several new policies to help them achieve that goal, one of which involved more flexible working hours. In 2009, pilot agreements had been reached with municipalities and provinces to adopt a 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. working day rather than the usual 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. model. Consideration was being given to extending the new model throughout the country. Developments in information and

communication technology also offered greater flexibility as to where work was carried out.

22. Improving women's prospects in the workplace was another incentive. The "Talent to the Top" Charter, launched in 2008, had already been signed by 140 organizations, which accounted for about 10 per cent of the entire working population.

23. As for financial incentives, the Government had decreased tax benefits for single-income households and increased them for dual-income households. There was a maximum tax benefit of almost 4,000 euros per annum for a wife returning to work. Efforts were also being made to move from the current model of the husband working full-time and the wife working part-time to a model of both partners working for four days a week. The task force Part-time Plus, established in 2007, had made a number of policy suggestions.

24. Policies had also been developed to increase the labour participation of women from ethnic minorities. Integration courses, volunteer work, paraprofessional positions and paid work were made available and discussions of male and female role models in society were held to help change the perception of women. There were also activities to help men and boys from ethnic-minority groups to change their attitude. As a result, there were already more female than male students from ethnic-minority groups in higher education.

25. The Government was concerned about the sexualization of society and the socialization of young people. It had launched projects in recent years to increase men's and boys' awareness of how to interact respectfully with women and girls and was considering how to include sexualization and sexual diversity in attainment targets for the education system. In 2009, a media code against stereotyping had come into effect.

26. Women's participation in politics had been increased without resort to legislative action to establish quotas. In the early 1990s, an agreement had been reached within and between political parties regarding the inclusion of women candidates. Some parties had alternated the names of men and women candidates on their lists and as a result, women had accounted for 40 per cent of those elected.

27. In line with the findings of the study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in Afghanistan, meetings had been organized in August 2009 in Afghanistan and in January 2010 at the Peace Palace in The Hague where women from Afghanistan and surrounding regions had given their perspectives on the best ways to achieve peace in Afghanistan. One quarter of all participants in the International Conference on the future of Afghanistan in London and the peace jirga in Afghanistan in 2010 had been women, whereas women had not been previously included.

28. The Netherlands was actively involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in combating sexual violence. Rape was a strategy of war and victims did not come forward, owing to the resulting social exclusion. If the subject of rape was not included in the peace agreement, peace would not come about for half of the population. Activities had also been developed to reach out to and educate the perpetrators.

29. In the Netherlands, gender equality was no longer considered to be exclusively a women's issue. In line with a policy outlined by the Cabinet and Parliament, more men had been involved in the gender issue.

30. **Vinay Sahasrabuddhe** (Director-General of the India-based organization Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini) asked how the Netherlands addressed the issue of commercialization and sexualization of the female body.

31. **Mr. Dijksterhuis** (Observer for the Netherlands) said a new policy on women and emancipation, which included the issue of sexualization, had been published. In addition to the media code, there was also an effort to educate children in the schools on how women and women's bodies should be viewed.

32. **Ms. Renford** (Observer for Israel) noted that in order to be agents of change, women needed to be given the opportunity to play that role. Much remained to be done with respect to family planning, and real change was difficult unless men were encouraged to accept it. She asked how men in the Netherlands were included in the action plans addressing the challenges mentioned previously.

33. **Mr. Dijksterhuis** (Observer for the Netherlands) said that his country had an ageing population and therefore family planning was not a problem. The Netherlands had encountered some difficulties with involving men in its international policies. There was a possibility of bias when support for education of girls and boys was channelled through activities carried out

by men, so the Netherlands insisted that programmes should focus on the entire population and that projects should target both genders.

Guatemala (E/2010/60)

34. **Ms. Umaña** (Guatemala), Secretary of State for Planning and Programming, accompanying her statement with a computerized slide presentation, said that Guatemala was a very diverse and unequal country. Diversity enriched the lives of its inhabitants but inequality hampered its development. All women experienced gender inequality though cultural, economic, social and political differences. Indigenous and rural women faced the greatest challenges when that situation was compounded by poverty, ethnic discrimination and territorial marginalization.

35. Since the signing of the 1996 peace accords, Guatemala had worked hard to make progress and had a high probability of achieving the MDGs in health and education. Guatemala had made progress with respect to reproductive health, but sexual rights and access to suitable maternal care continued to lag for indigenous women. Guatemala needed to close the gender gap with respect to the impact of HIV/AIDS. Over a five-year period, the number of women affected by HIV/AIDS had surpassed that of men, despite the improvement in access to medication and other indicators.

36. Despite improvements since 1990, Guatemalan women and young people did not have access to decent jobs and there was a large gap in pay. Rural women earned some two thirds of the amount earned by Guatemalan urban men. Guatemala continued to face challenges with regard to empowerment, political participation and maternal mortality. Gender-based violence, with a growing number of women meeting a violent death, was another challenge. Given Guatemala's post-conflict situation, coupled with cultural factors, women found it hard to avoid violence in their lives.

37. Since becoming a democracy in 1986, Guatemala had made progress, but had far to go with regard to increasing women's political participation in both central and local government. Few women were mayors or members of municipal councils, which were a cornerstone of national development.

38. Guatemala had established a Presidential Secretariat for Women, an Ombudsman's Office for Indigenous Women and a national policy for women's integration and equal opportunity. Alliances between women's organizations and public institutions and between women and other marginalized groups were essential. Guatemala had constantly maintained public policies for women throughout the previous three administrations, thanks to sustained support from women's organizations. Close to half of public policies had included gender mainstreaming and ethnic and gender equality.

39. The adverse economic climate, a historic reluctance to increase the tax rate, and the need for radical change in societal attitudes towards women all contributed to Guatemala's slow progress towards achieving the MDGs and gender equality.

40. Guatemala needed to better manage its development. Priority was being given to public policies for the empowerment of women, but Guatemala needed a good planning system to ensure that public policies would have an impact on people's daily lives and to include women's rights on the political agenda. Transparency, monitoring and a tracking system were expected to strengthen programmes. Guatemala had also made significant efforts to ensure that its national policies included its international commitments.

41. Natural disasters posed an additional challenge to the achievement of the MDGs. Nonetheless, the Government was firmly committed to meeting the Goals and had adopted a monitoring programme with a view to achieving them in the next five years.

42. **Ms. Montenegro** (Guatemala), Technical Director, Reproductive Health Observatory, said that given the ethnic diversity of Guatemala, the cultural aspect of education and health was a decisive factor in the success of public policies.

43. Guatemala had developed laws to protect the right to family planning and to fight sexual violence, femicide and trafficking in women but faced the challenge of implementing these laws. Guatemala needed to invest in the development of women and to implement sustainable State programmes and policies that would enable it to achieve the Goals. Strategic alliances between the State, the private sector and civil society were required for Guatemala to progress as a country.

44. **Ms. Pineda** (Guatemala), Executive Director of FUNDAZUCAR, the Sugar Growers Association of Guatemala, said that gender equality and empowerment had become part of corporate social responsibility; State policies alone could not achieve change. The productive sector, in alliance with the public sector, needed to focus on certain cultural and social aspects to reduce the gender gap with respect to work opportunities, pay and promotion, given that families considered girls to be less important than boys. Efforts were needed to guarantee that every girl had access to education and health care. An educated woman created better health and economic conditions for herself and her family.

45. As women achieved full empowerment, political mechanisms would become decentralized and allow the active participation of the private sector. It was imperative to guarantee women and girls equal opportunities for education regardless of ethnic background or geographical location, and to ensure that achievements were maintained.

46. **Mr. Wittig** (Germany), reviewer, welcomed the report's honest and realistic review of the country's progress towards achieving the MDGs. The Governments of Germany and Guatemala had been development partners for more than 30 years, closely cooperating in the areas of education democratic governance and justice. All their joint development projects stressed gender equality and empowering indigenous peoples. Great progress had been made in those areas in recent years, in particular with regard to rural populations, but significant challenges remained. Overall, it seemed it would be difficult to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

47. The report and presentation had highlighted three areas that were key to achieving the necessary change: an economic policy that prioritized sustainable economic growth and involved women; a redistribution policy that would enhance social cohesion; and policies designed to broaden access to basic services and social protection, promote the empowerment of women and combat racism and discrimination. There also needed to be improvements in the planning and implementation of Government measures, inter-ministerial coordination, and coordination with and among donors.

48. He welcomed the Government's willingness to undertake fiscal reform, but said that it should not be limited to tax increases: the whole system should be restructured, in particular by enabling the collection of progressive, direct taxes. Such reform would also fund other necessary changes, such as reform of the justice system and improvements in the security situation, since widespread impunity and increasing violence against women were major obstacles to development.

49. In closing, he enquired about the Government's priorities for achieving the various MDG targets, given its limited resources. He also asked how the Government could foster stronger links with civil society.

50. **Ms. Carreño** (Observer for Mexico), reviewer, commended the efforts made by the Government of Guatemala and the decision to include civil-society representatives in its delegation.

51. Her Government welcomed the measures adopted in Guatemala to strengthen the institutional capacity and legislative framework for the defence and promotion of human rights, particularly with regard to reducing discrimination and violence against women. Significant achievements included the establishment of various organizations, policies and programmes targeting important areas of women's rights, promoting development and encouraging women's participation in decision-making. Their successes suggested that Guatemala had the potential to sustain such projects and programmes and move forward with its development agenda.

52. Mexico's experiences led her to recommend that programmes promoting equality for indigenous women should be strengthened, particularly in the areas of education, work and health. Social policies should include cross-cutting gender and human rights perspectives from the outset, with allocated budgets. It was also crucial to establish gender-sensitive indicators to evaluate the impact of the policies adopted.

53. She asked whether the Government of Guatemala intended to implement any additional strategies in order to achieve the MDG targets and how it intended to encourage the participation of women — indigenous women in particular — in political and economic decision-making.

54. **Ms. Umaña** (Guatemala), Secretary of State for Planning and Programming, said that the Government had instructed her department to use the information it had gathered while preparing the report for the Council to establish a plan to monitor progress towards the

achievement of the MDGs during the transition between Governments. However, efforts to build a solid fiscal policy were also necessary, as were measures to implement the existing policies on indigenous women.

55. The Presidential Secretariat for Women was institutionalizing the gender perspective in all public policies and monitoring its implementation. Various Government institutions had committed to strengthening work at the municipal level. In that regard, one initiative was to revive a national planning system with a view to achieving the Goals at the local level. Mayors, municipal development councils and civil society would monitor progress locally using at least 14 indicators. Another strategy was to establish municipal women's offices in smaller municipalities by 2015, although they already existed in almost all areas.

56. The most important strategy was to have a shared vision for achieving the MDGs. There needed to be a joint effort by civil society, the private sector and public institutions, so that the Goals could be achieved more quickly.

57. **Ms. Renford** (Observer for Israel) asked whether the Government and civil society organizations interacted with organizations of Guatemalan migrants in other countries. Israel had worked with several Guatemalan organizations to provide education programmes for young people, indigenous women and other vulnerable groups.

58. **Ms. Umaña** (Guatemala), Secretary of State for Planning and Programming, said that there was increasingly strong cooperation with migrant organizations, especially those in North America. An Act on the creation of a National Council for Assistance to Guatemalan Migrants had been passed approximately two years previously. The Council had enabled greater interaction with migrant communities through a joint plan of action. One of its main objectives was for Guatemalan citizens to benefit from the experiences, knowledge and new opportunities being created by Guatemalans abroad. Such links with Guatemalan communities abroad had also been crucial in providing assistance during the recent tropical storm. They also enabled the creation of economic links between rural areas in Guatemala and communities abroad, which had led to exchange programmes and the promotion of local economic activity.

59. **Ms. Pineda** (Guatemala), Executive Director of FUNDAZUCAR, the Sugar Growers Association of Guatemala, said that her organization had worked with the Government of Israel in a community project for children and on a private initiative in coordination with the Ministries of Education and Health. The strategy formulated at that time was being put into action, with involvement from local partners, and it was hoped that it could become municipal policy, as had been the case in Israel.

60. **Mr. Dijksterhuis** (Observer for the Netherlands) asked whether any gender-specific research had been done into the effects of the natural disasters that the country had suffered in recent times, noting that research into such disasters elsewhere had shown that a majority of victims were female. Noting that climate change might increase the severity of future natural disasters, he wondered to what extent a gender perspective was being included in new disaster-preparedness activities.

61. **Ms. Umaña** (Guatemala), Secretary of State for Planning and Programming, said that Guatemala had been classified among the 10 countries most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, which could already be seen in the significant increase in both the frequency and intensity of storms over the past 10 years. The country's socio-economic situation also made it particularly vulnerable. Women had been victims, but they were also an important part of reconstruction, particularly with regard to re-establishing the fabric of society following such disasters. Following the lessons learned in the aftermath of Hurricane Stan, when many victims of the mudslides in the region of Lake Atitlán had been women and children, the country had been better prepared to respond to the recent tropical storm.

62. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean would be presenting its preliminary assessment of the damage caused by that storm later that week, which would then be used to raise awareness of the effects of the disaster on women, particularly those in indigenous communities. The President had decided that the focus should be not only on reconstruction, but also on making the system of public investment more secure and on strengthening local capacities in order to increase resilience and assist in reconstruction and prevention. In that context, women could take more leadership roles in local emergency preparedness and response units.

63. **Ms. Montenegro** (Guatemala), Technical Director, Reproductive Health Observatory, said that, in coordination with the Presidential Secretariat for Women, it had been decided to make rape kits available in shelters, since an increase in the incidence of rape and unwanted pregnancies had been noted in times of natural disaster. Malnutrition also increased, since many families lost their subsistence farms. Therefore, as part of the package of measures developed to assist women in the immediate aftermath of such disasters, basic provisions should be distributed.

64. **Ms. Leckomba Loumeto-Pombo** (Congo) asked what measures had been taken to address the issue of girls as young as 10 becoming mothers and to assist their reintegration into society, noting that the girl child was one of the priorities contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

65. **Mr. Nahayo** (Observer for Burundi), asking about the education of boys, wondered whether a change in mentality had been seen with regard to their views towards the legal position of girls.

66. **Ms. Umaña** (Guatemala), Secretary of State for Planning and Programming, said that one of the main challenges in addressing the phenomenon of young mothers had been to recognize it as a problem requiring changes in public policy and raising public awareness. A series of studies into maternal and child health conducted over the past 20 years had helped show the severity of the problem. There were, however, several challenges to be faced, not least of which was that some cultural, linguistic and/or religious groups in the country had differing views and were reluctant to see it as an issue requiring State intervention.

67. Following efforts by civil society organizations, in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance and other relevant bodies, new legislation — including the Family Planning Act — strengthened sexual and reproductive health programmes. It was important to ensure, however, that the Ministry of Public Health was able to implement such laws. The Ministry of Education was also raising awareness by including sex education in primary school curricula. With United Nations support, Guatemala had for several years been running a programme to promote responsible paternity, which was also being introduced into school curricula.

Republic of Moldova (E/2010/67)

68. **Mr. Bodiu** (Republic of Moldova), Minister of State, accompanying his statement with a computerized slide presentation, said that his country had established national targets for achieving the MDGs in 2004, which had then been revised in 2007 following analysis and consultations with relevant bodies. The Goals were embedded in the National Development Strategy for 2008-2011 and their progress was being monitored.

69. The Republic of Moldova had made important progress towards reducing poverty and child and maternal mortality, expanding State-protected areas, broadening access to information technologies and promoting gender equality. However, the country was lagging behind with regard to education, combating tuberculosis and ensuring access to proper sanitation.

70. In 2007, the Republic of Moldova had allocated 1.8 per cent of GDP to social-assistance programmes, which was slightly higher than the regional average and most low-income countries. By the end of 2010, the Government expected to be able to cover two thirds of those eligible for social assistance and to phase out nominal compensations. An intensive public-awareness campaign on that issue was under way. In addition, the minimum wage had been increased and would be raised again to the level of the absolute-poverty line. The new social-assistance programmes had already had an impact, with the rates of both absolute poverty and extreme poverty decreasing between 2008 and 2009.

71. Gender equality had been a priority for the Government since 2006. Laws on gender equality and preventing and combating domestic violence had been adopted, and a Governmental Commission for Equality between Women and Men and a Department of Policies for Ensuring Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence had been established. A national Programme and Plan of Action for Ensuring Gender Equality had also been adopted and gender policies had been embedded in the Government's programme for the first time.

72. One in four women in the Republic of Moldova aged between 16 and 35 had suffered domestic violence, and the country was also affected by human trafficking. Of the victims of trafficking that had been assisted, 70 per cent had been living in poverty and 90 per cent had previously been victims of domestic violence. The Government, in partnership with international and non-governmental organizations, had

implemented a national referral system to provide assistance to victims and potential victims of trafficking, which had so far helped approximately 900 people. A National Committee for Preventing Trafficking in Persons, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, had also been established.

73. In education and agriculture, policies had been less successful. Despite increasing spending on education — 8.2 per cent of GDP in 2008 compared to 5.7 per cent in 2000 — less than 40 per cent of the funds were being used to implement reforms, with the rest allocated to salary payments. It should be noted, however, that salaries in education were generally significantly lower than the average and, since women significantly outnumbered men in that sector, that could help explain the overall gender pay gap. Half of the expenditure in education was for general compulsory education. However, school infrastructure was only being used at two thirds capacity and the enrolment rate had been continually declining since 2005. The Government, with support from its development partners, had recently launched reforms to improve efficiency in education, including by optimizing the school network.

74. Between 2004 and 2008, agricultural subsidies in the Republic of Moldova had increased twentyfold. However, the sector generally lacked efficiency and competitiveness. Farmers predominantly received input and output subsidies, rather than investment, but starting in 2010, the Government was introducing reform to provide incentives for investment in high-value agriculture, with significant support from the United States Agency for International Development through the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

75. Though significant progress had been made in reducing poverty since 2000, the Republic of Moldova was still lagging behind other countries in the region in terms of GDP per capita. The global economic crisis had of course also affected the country: in 2009, all sectors of the economy had stagnated and GDP had dropped by 6.5 per cent. However, GDP had increased by 4.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2010. The crisis presented an opportunity to streamline public spending and promote necessary reforms — although the challenge would be to maintain that path of reform during 2010, an electoral year. Another emerging opportunity was the future EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement.

76. There were also a number of gender-related challenges. Although women now held 30 per cent of the seats in Parliament, possibilities for their equal participation in the labour market were limited. Women were mostly employed in low-paid sectors and tended to occupy lower positions within those sectors. The unemployment rate among women was also increasing.

77. In conclusion, he said that the Government was committed to achieving the MDGs through national reform programmes. All the Goals would be fully integrated into national policy papers and, of the 27 MDG targets, at least 21 were expected to be achieved by 2015.

78. **Mr. Garayev** (Observer for Azerbaijan) said the presentation had shown that the national policies and strategies of the Republic of Moldova were in full accord with the internationally agreed goals. Results of efforts to achieve the MDGs had varied, with better results in social spheres to which due attention had been paid throughout the development process, such as poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and, in some aspects, education. Initiation and support of regional initiatives on gender issues and on human trafficking and unemployment had been admirable, and progress had been made with regard to Goals 2, 3, 4 and 5. However, he noted the need for further substantial funding and policy intervention if better performance were to be achieved.

79. **Ms. Miculescu** (Observer for Romania) said that her delegation appreciated the focus on Goal 3 in the presentation, and agreed with the assertion that that Goal entailed a need to change the ways people thought about the issue. The approach taken by Moldova in that regard could prove useful for other countries attempting to promote gender equality in traditionally patriarchal societies.

80. She commended the Government of the Republic of Moldova for its attention to human rights, the rule of law and democracy, and the inclusion of gender equality on its agenda, and expressed confidence that it would continue to focus on problematic areas such as domestic violence, workplace discrimination and human trafficking. A normative base and competent national bodies to combat gender discrimination were in place, and there was political will to overcome the problems still encountered in promoting women's rights. The national programme on gender equality for 2010-2015 and its action plan were credible

instruments as well as essential tools for realizing the MDGs. Moreover, by acknowledging that education was a key factor in combating the prejudices of a traditional society, the Moldovan authorities had demonstrated realism and vision.

81. Her delegation noted with growing concern, however, that the existence of the separatist Transnistrian region, over which the capital had limited control, was generating lawlessness and contributing to the problem of human trafficking, thereby proving that tolerance of protracted conflicts only exacerbated existing problems. On the other hand, her delegation appreciated the firm commitment of the Republic of Moldova to European integration, and to achieve political, economic and social modernization by implementing the commitments deriving from the European course. In that context, Romania viewed the Republic of Moldova as a priority partner country, and would always support its efforts to implement democratic reforms, consolidate a sustainable economy and promote European principles and values.

82. **Mr. Barton** (United States of America) said that the presentation by the Republic of Moldova had been one of the most honest self-appraisals his delegation had seen, and commended its realistic and balanced treatment of significant advances and enormous challenges. The organization of the presentation in accordance with the MDGs was very helpful. Noting the dramatic challenges faced by the Republic of Moldova over the previous few years, he commended its accomplishments to date including equal access to education and literacy, reduction of maternal mortality, the growing representation of women in Parliament, and the adoption of legislative codes and other standards. The United States strongly supported gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Republic of Moldova, and was committed to continuing its support of the Moldovan Government's efforts to reach its objectives and achieve integration with Europe.

83. Given the great discrepancy between the legal framework and the reality at the community level noted in the report, he asked for an appraisal of what would be needed for the Government's efforts in that regard to take hold, and whether a tipping point was foreseen in the near future. In the context of the report's description of shortcomings in the rule of law, he asked about the importance of the rule of law in dealing with such shortcomings in the area of gender equality, in a situation in which there was a well-educated public, a decent normative environment and a committed Government. Finally, he asked whether the drop in population offered opportunities for women, and if incentives were needed or planned in that regard.

84. **Mr. Pistrinciuk** (Republic of Moldova), Deputy Minister for Labour Social Protection and Family, said that his country was moving from complex central strategic frameworks towards an implementation process based on targeted local intervention initiatives. Actions were being undertaken to develop the capacities of community organizations and to get local public services to work together. National programmes to combat domestic violence and trafficking were being redirected to the grass-roots level, as a result of which the number of trafficking victims had declined threefold since 2007. Problems in the administration of justice continued, however, and he announced that an important package of legal amendments on prevention of violence and protection of victims was about to be approved by Parliament.

85. **Mr. Bodiu** (Republic of Moldova), Minister of State, said that, while the restructuring of the Office of the State Prosecutor, an important related task, could be delayed owing to upcoming elections, his Government was fully aware of the need to re-establish the rule of law in the country.

86. **Mr. Pistrinciuk** (Republic of Moldova), Deputy Minister for Labour, Social Protection and Family, said that with regard to the issues of political will and the participation of women in politics, political parties were discussing modalities and programmes for encouraging more women to participate in local and national elections; the legal and institutional frameworks already provided for such participation, and it was necessary to continue education and capacity development for women at the local level.

87. **Ms. Immonen** (United Nations Development Programme, Republic of Moldova) said that Moldova faced the challenge of preserving development gains realized over the previous decade while containing the impact of the economic crisis on growth and meeting international commitments such as the MDGs. She congratulated the Moldovan Government on turning the crisis into an opportunity to carry out reforms, and on remaining a caring Government despite the toughness of the reform policies being enacted. Those policies were clearly guided by the country's

international commitments, including the MDGs. The adoption of several laws, programmes and action plans was particularly noteworthy, along with the strengthened role of the judiciary in human rights enforcement, which she hoped would be replicated in other areas. She also noted the increase in protection orders issued by Moldovan courts to victims of domestic violence.

88. **Mr. Pistrinciuk** (Republic of Moldova), Deputy Minister for Labour, Social Protection and Family, responding to the query of the United States representative, said that his Government placed great importance on the integration of the social services and cash-benefit systems. It was crucial to have good social-services networks at the local level, especially in vulnerable communities; for that reason the intersectoral approach was very important, and the linking of social services with cash benefits would help to prevent many of the social issues currently facing the country. That integrated approach would be consolidated over the next two years, and he forecast a decrease in negative phenomena such as domestic violence, human trafficking and illegal migration as a result.

89. **Ms. Bodrug-Lungu** (Republic of Moldova), civil society representative, said that she wished to recognize the significant steps taken by the Government to ensure gender equality, especially the adoption of laws on gender equality and combating domestic violence. She also recognized the support of the international donor community. At the same time, to improve gender-equality policy, she recommended adequate financial allocations to ensure the substantive implementation of the laws. Most important was the active involvement of non-governmental and civil society organizations in development, implementation and monitoring of programmes and resources at all levels, as well as the enforcement of legal mechanisms to combat human trafficking and domestic violence and to ensure the accreditation of social services.

90. **Mr. Bodiu** (Republic of Moldova), Minister of State, said that he welcomed the participation of civil society organizations, and noted the recent establishment of a national participation council, representing and channelling the recommendations of some 30 of the most active non-governmental organizations in the country. Moreover, the Government was mandated to consult that council on all Government decisions and normative acts, reflecting its commitment to a positive synergy with the NGO sector.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.